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California Postsecondary Education Commission

Improving Teacher Quality (ITQ) Program Application Process and Grant Awards

*Eight new ITQ grants have been
awarded for the period 2005 to 2009.
The projects will support
professional development for teachers
throughout the state and will
supplement approximately 20 current
grant projects.*

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The Commission advises the Governor and Legislature on higher education policy and fiscal issues. Its primary focus is to ensure that the state's educational resources are used effectively to provide Californians with postsecondary education opportunities. More information about the Commission is available at www.cpec.ca.gov.

Commission Report 05-11

The federal Improving Teacher Quality State Grants Program—Title II-A of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001—provides funding for partnerships between Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) and Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to support professional development for teachers. The California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC) administers about \$8 million in federal funds each year. The Commission has recently completed a Request for Applications to award the next cycle of grants. As a result, eight projects were funded for a four-year period ending September 30, 2009 (see Appendix A).

This program has been an important and successful part of CPEC's work for more than 20 years, and continues to play an important role in teacher professional development in California. This paper reviews the Commission's Request for Proposal process and identifies the rationale leading to the selection of the eight projects.

Request for Proposals Process

The Request for Proposals (RFP) process began with identifying the focus for the current cycle of grants. Based on a review of state needs, it was determined that the focus of this year's RFP would be limited to academic literacy in middle and secondary schools. Academic literacy has been identified as a critical need at the secondary level, is consistent with the goals of the California Department of Education, and supports state and national education reform efforts.

The Request for Proposals was distributed in May 2005 to every IHE and LEA in California. Following a series of regional technical assistance meetings, 52 Letters of Intent were submitted by mid-June. Thirty applications were submitted to CPEC

by August 1st. The applications were reviewed by panels of peer reviewers selected from throughout the state and eight applicants were selected for interviews.

Following mid-September interviews, the panel recommended that all eight projects be funded, subject to minor clarifications and adjustments to the respective proposals. The projects were then submitted to the Executive Director for approval of funding. Subsequently, news releases were distributed statewide (see Appendix B) and legislators were informed of successful projects in their districts.

The selection process was a rigorous one involving 20 reviewers who were recruited on the basis of their professional experience and education. CPEC's two-step process of reader reviews followed by interviews was cited for commendation by the U.S. Department of Education in its recent monitoring review of California's program.

There was excellent collaboration with the California Department of Education (CDE) and with other education stakeholders in determining the focus of the RFP and aligning it with needs identified by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Governor, and the U.S. Department of Education. CDE assisted in publicizing the RFP and provided meeting space for the proposal review process. In spite of a short application timeframe, there was a high level of statewide interest in the grants.

Characteristics of successful grant proposals

- Although it can be argued that *all* the proposals targeted “high need” schools, several of the projects serve districts that have had particularly limited opportunities for intensive professional development, including the Lynwood, Delano, and the Redwood Empire school districts. In addition, projects in all the LEAs, including Local District 6 of the Los Angeles Unified School District, have great potential to strongly influence the practices of high-need schools.
- The number of current teachers that a project expects to serve directly may increase as the project develops. In addition, several projects will provide support to pre-service teachers. All the projects will also indirectly benefit many more teachers than those who directly participate.
- The costs associated with the projects that were funded are somewhat greater than the typical professional development grant for a variety of reasons:
 - Each project involves at least three partners and some have additional partners, generating costs to manage and coordinate the collaborative work of operating the project.
 - Each has a significant research component that goes beyond the typical “evaluation” to produce evidence of the effect of the project on student achievement in the affected LEA. The research portion of the project requires controls that would help establish causality in the outcomes reported.
 - Most of the projects will develop “intellectual products” such as lesson plans and manuals for participants, unique assessment tools, and video or other online materials.
 - Each project is expected to incorporate activities to disseminate the results of the project and create a level of sustainability that will outlast each project's funding. These requirements are not typically included in professional development grants.
 - The projects target more than just the teacher as the “agent of change” -- they seek to affect whole schools or possibly an entire district. This necessarily creates more complex projects with more challenges and potential costs.

- Each of these projects seeks either to establish a new model of professional development or to adapt existing models to new circumstances; and each incorporates components determined by scientifically based research to be consistent with effective professional development.
 - Academic literacy is a relatively new area of focus in professional development, and projects made special efforts to incorporate the work of recognized experts in helping design them. In most cases, there are no existing models that provide the specific professional development these projects offer.
- Each one of these projects embodies significant principles about what constitutes effective professional development that have been validated through scientifically based research and that are incorporated in CPEC's evaluation of project proposals. These principles include: helping educators connect their instruction with challenging state and national content standards; reflecting current research on a wide variety of teaching and learning methods and styles; and being sustainable, intensive, and of high quality.
- California's Improving Teacher Quality State Grants Program is one of the few in the nation that conducts an ongoing program-wide evaluation process through the work of an Assessment and Dissemination (A&D) Team. Expert evaluators work with individual projects and with the program to capture the lessons learned through the implementation of project activities and through the overall interaction of LEAs with institutions of higher education. Periodically, those lessons are shared in monographs or other publications. The work of the A&D team is incorporated into program design and informs the Request for Proposals process, so the ITQ program is in a state of constant refinement and improvement.
- These projects are the "Research & Development" arm of federally supported professional development; they are not "out of the box," standard-issue professional development. Most Title II-A funding is distributed by formula directly through LEAs and is not generally able to be used to develop demonstration projects or innovative approaches to professional development of this type. In addition, most Title II-A funding is not required to be used in partnership with higher education, which brings a unique perspective to the task.
- The CPEC-administered funds make up only about 2% of the entire federal grant to California for professional development under NCLB. Their use is intended not just to provide professional development opportunities, but also to foster efforts to *improve* professional development, create new models or improve existing ones, and *increase the State's understanding of what makes professional development effective* as the grantee projects deliver it. Projects are expected to expand knowledge about the ways in which professional development can have the greatest impact and can best improve student achievement. Not every one of these projects will successfully achieve all their teacher practice and student achievement goals; but all will contribute to our understanding of what works and what teachers need to support student achievement. That has been the history of this grant program in California, and it is the intent of the current grant process.

Appendix A: 2005 Improving Teacher Quality State Grants

Project Number & Funding	IHE Partner	LEA Partner	Project Name	Summary of Project
ITQ-02-301 \$986,078	California State University Bakersfield	Delano Joint Union High School District	Content Academic Language Literacy Institute (CALLI)	Science and math teachers receive intensive summer institutes, follow-up seminars and site-based coaching to improve academic literacy skills in high-poverty rural district. Builds on successful professional development institute for English Learners.
ITQ-02-313 \$982,197	California State Polytechnic University Pomona	El Monte Union High School District	STELLAR ² : Students and Teachers Excelling in Literacy, Language and Academic Reasoning and Reflection	Teachers will receive instructional intervention strategies for teaching reading, writing, and thinking skills across all core curriculum subjects. Project includes intensive summer institute plus academic year planning, coaching, and collaborative work designed to ensure implementation in classrooms.
ITQ-02-316 \$991,328	California State University San Bernardino	San Bernardino City Unified School District	Developing Rigorous Education in the Arts to Motivate Students (DREAMS)	Through summer institutes and year-round Collaborative Design Institute, arts educators in San Bernardino and neighboring districts will improve students' academic literacy in the implementation of state arts standards. New assessment tools and professional development curriculum in the arts will be piloted by this project.
ITQ-02-319 \$994,032	Humboldt State University	Konocti Unified School District	Redwood Area Academic Literacy Initiative (RAALI)	This project reaches teachers in 16 school districts throughout a high-poverty region with institutes, site-based mentoring and coaching, and online communication. This unique regional project will support an ongoing community of teachers who can improve student achievement through academic literacy strategies.

Project Number & Funding	IHE Partner	LEA Partner	Project Name	Summary of Project
ITQ-02-335 \$1,000,000	University of California Davis	Grant Joint Union High School District	Reading, Thinking and Writing in History and Science	All secondary science and history teachers in a high-poverty, low-achieving district will receive professional development in academic literacy and follow-up coaching during the academic year. The project leverages similar inquiry-based literacy skills in science and history.
ITQ-02-337 \$875,020	University of California Irvine	Lynwood Unified School District	Accelerating Academic Literacy: A Cognitive Strategies Approach to Reading and Writing Instruction	High school and middle school English teachers in this urban school district will receive intensive training in cognitive strategies, enabling them to help improve student achievement in English/Language Arts by accelerating academic literacy. This tests a successful training model under new conditions.
ITQ-02-339 \$935,948	University of California Irvine	Santa Ana Unified School District	Literacy in the History Classroom	History teachers will receive instruction in content and strategies to address students' literacy needs in history in this high-poverty urban district. The project builds a professional network of history teachers in the district across grade levels and school boundaries who are trained in academic literacy in history.
ITQ-02-342 \$1,000,000	University of California San Diego	Los Angeles Unified School District (Local District 6)	Access to the Core: Support for Secondary English Language Learners	Literacy cadres—teams of lead teachers—will work in 12 middle and high schools to provide training in the core content areas of reading/language arts, mathematics, and English Language Development. Intensive institutes and academic year follow-up will focus on 8 th and 9 th grade language arts, pre-algebra and algebra.

Appendix B: Press Release



California Postsecondary Education Commission

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CPEC Helping to Improve Teaching and Learning in California

SACRAMENTO — November 7, 2005 — The California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC) today announced it has awarded nearly eight million dollars in new grants aimed at improving the quality of teaching and learning in California. These grants were awarded to eight partnerships of universities and K-12 education agencies statewide (see attached) and will provide intensive training and on-site coaching for several hundred teachers for three years. The fourth year of the grants requires an evaluation of the impact of that training on student achievement.

"This is a rigorous process intended to understand what really works in professional development and high school reform," said CPEC Executive Director Murray Haberman. "The grants require in-depth research to demonstrate the impact of the professional development on student achievement. This kind of accountability is critical to spending taxpayer dollars wisely on programs that really work."

The grants are part of a long-standing federal program that is now funded under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. CPEC has awarded more than \$75 million in grants to colleges and universities working in partnership with high-need local school districts since 1984. This year's grants focus on the need for students to have stronger reading, writing, and analytical skills in all high school subjects. Known as "academic literacy", these skills often spell the difference between success and failure for students who have mastered basic literacy but who have trouble understanding complex concepts and navigating the language of academic disciplines.

CPEC Chairman Howard Welinsky expressed enthusiasm for the awards. "These grants will provide hundreds of California teachers with expertise and support from colleges and universities that will lead to improved teaching ability and greater academic achievement by students," he said. "This means those students will be better prepared for college and for the high-skill jobs required in today's economy."

More information about the Commission and its work can be found at its website at www.cpec.ca.gov. For more information about this program or individual projects, contact Karen Humphrey, Administrator, Improving Teacher Quality Program, at 916-445-1504 or khumphrey@cpec.ca.gov.

2005 Improving Teacher Quality Grants
California Postsecondary Education Commission

California State University Bakersfield *in partnership with*
Delano Joint Union High School District
Project Name: Project CALLI: Content Academic Language Literacy Instruction
Amount: \$986,078

California State Polytechnic University Pomona *in partnership with*
El Monte Union High School District
Project Name: Project STELLAR²: Students and Teachers Excelling in Literacy, Language and Academic Reasoning and Reflection
Amount: \$982,197

California State University San Bernardino *in partnership with*
San Bernardino City Unified School District
Project Name: Developing Rigorous Education in the Arts to Motivate Students (DREAMS)
Amount: \$991,328

Humboldt State University *in partnership with*
Konocti Unified School District, other Redwood Area districts, and Sonoma State University
Project Name: Redwood Area Academic Learning Initiative (RAALI)
Amount: \$994,032

University of California Davis *in partnership with*
Grant Joint Union High School District
Project Name: Reading, Thinking, and Writing in History and Science
Amount: \$1,000,000

University of California Irvine *in partnership with*
Lynwood Unified School District
Project Name: Accelerating Academic Literacy: A Cognitive Strategies Approach to Reading and Writing Instruction for Teachers of Secondary English Language Learners
Amount: \$875,020

University of California Irvine *in partnership with*
Santa Ana Unified School District
Project Name: Literacy in the History Classroom
Amount: \$935,948

University of California San Diego *in partnership with*
Los Angeles Unified School District (Local District 6)
Project Name: Access to the Core: Support for Secondary Language Learners
Amount: \$1,000,000

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